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CENTRAL AMERICA:  
THE PEACE PROCESS



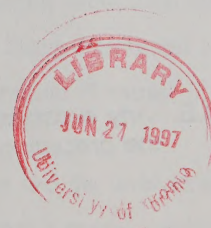
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**CENTRAL AMERICA:  
THE PEACE PROCESS**

**Michel Rossignol**  
**Political and Social Affairs Division**

*Revised 23 September 1996*



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## CENTRAL AMERICA: THE PEACE PROCESS\*

### ISSUE DEFINITION

The people of Central America, together with their neighbours and friends, have been striving for years to bring about a lasting peace in the region. Years of conflict have left the social and economic infrastructures damaged, and the difficult task of reconciling the antagonists is by no means completed. This paper gives an overview of the work done so far to bring peace to Central America and indicates the Canadian contribution to this process.

### BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

#### A. The Contadora Peace Initiative

Long before the war between the Sandinistas and Contras began in Nicaragua, Central America was grappling with social and political unrest. In El Salvador the government was overthrown in 1979 and the country plunged into civil war, with right-wing death squads confronting Marxist rebels and those suspected of sympathizing with them. In Nicaragua, the fall of the Somoza government the same year enabled the Sandinistas, who quickly showed the Marxist leanings of their government, to take power. Relations with the United States deteriorated and in 1981 the Reagan administration committed itself to supporting the Nicaraguan "Contras" in their fight against the Sandinista government.

In view of the region's economic and social deterioration and the involvement of major world powers, a number of neighbouring countries decided to launch a peace initiative. In January 1983, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama met

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on the Panamanian island of Contadora to discuss ways of finding a peaceful solution to the conflict in the region. With the backing of the Lima support group, created in 1985 by Brazil, Peru, Argentina and Uruguay, and with the encouragement of a number of other countries, including Canada, the Contadora group began talks with Central American governments and the United States to reach an agreement for achieving peace, but by 1986 it was widely felt that the Contadora initiative had run out of steam.

## B. The Arias Peace Plan

### 1. Signing the Peace Accord

The Central American presidents, nevertheless, did not give up hope. In February 1987, the Presidents of Costa Rica, Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras met in San José, Costa Rica, to discuss a plan for a regional peace conference. The participants invited the President of Nicaragua to attend the proposed conference to study a new peace plan, put forward by the President of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias Sanchez. Despite the uncertainty, the five Central American presidents met on 6 and 7 August 1987 at Ciudad, Guatemala. On 7 August 1987, to everyone's surprise, the five presidents signed a peace agreement known as the Esquipulas II Accord (sometimes referred to as the Guatemala Accord).

### 2. Nicaragua and Implementation of the Accord

By signing the agreement, the five Central American countries committed themselves to making the compromises needed to maintain the impetus of the peace process, but they were counting primarily on concessions by Nicaragua. The Sandinista government on 5 November announced that it was ready to negotiate a cease-fire with the Contras. Then, at the summit meeting of the Central American presidents on 15 and 16 January 1988, Nicaragua's President Ortega announced that the state of emergency limiting political rights in his country would be lifted and that his government was ready to begin direct negotiations with the Contras.

On 23 March 1988, the Sandinista government and the Contras signed an agreement which provided for a 60-day cease-fire to take effect on 1 April, specified the areas of Nicaragua

where the Contras could remain, and stipulated that the Contras were not to request or receive military aid from the United States. In return, the Sandinistas would grant an amnesty to political prisoners and guarantee freedom of speech to the people of Nicaragua, as required under the Esquipulas II Accord of August 1987.

### C. Reactivation of the Peace Process

#### 1. Effects of New International Context

Shortly after the United States presidential elections, the Central American presidents agreed to hold a summit meeting in early 1989. When the five presidents met in Costa Del Sol in El Salvador on 13 and 14 February 1989, they agreed to demobilize the Contras based in Honduras. In exchange for this initiative, Nicaragua agreed to implement political reforms and to hold free and fair elections by 26 February 1990.

On 7 August 1989, while the Nicaraguan election campaign proceeded apace, the five Central American presidents met in Tela, Honduras and announced that they had requested that the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) establish an International Support and Verification Commission or CIAV (Spanish acronym) to supervise the demobilization of the Contras. The Tela Declaration also asked for the deployment of military observers to monitor the border between Honduras and Nicaragua as part of the United Nations Observer Group in Central America or ONUCA (Spanish acronym).

A few weeks after the successful summit meeting, the government of El Salvador and the FMLN announced on 15 September 1989 that they had reached agreement on a negotiating process which would feature monthly meetings between the two sides. However, hopes for a negotiated settlement appeared dashed when FMLN guerrillas attacked San Salvador on 11 November. The murder of prominent Jesuits increased international dismay at the turn of events.

## 2. Effects of Nicaraguan Elections

During the first weeks of the new year, most of the attention was focused on the Nicaraguan elections slated for 25 February 1990. The election campaign, observed by representatives from various countries including Canada, proceeded in a fair and orderly fashion. The results of the election, however, caught everyone by surprise. Mrs. Chamorro, with about 55% of the vote, defeated President Ortega in the presidential race and her party, the UNO, won 52 of the 90 seats in the National Assembly.

The defeat of the Sandinistas gave the peace process in the region a new lease on life and the United States took measures to remove its economic embargo against Nicaragua. The five Central American presidents, including Mr. Ortega, who was slated to remain president until 25 April, met in Nicaragua on 2-3 April and agreed to encourage the Contras to disarm quickly. The hopes for peace in the region were bolstered the following day, when representatives of the Salvadoran government and of the FMLN agreed, at a meeting in Geneva, to resume peace negotiations.

### D. Situation in Nicaragua

On 19 April 1990, the Sandinistas and the Contras finally signed a cease-fire agreement which cleared the way for the new government. On 28 June 1990, the Contra leaders surrendered their weapons to President Chamorro, thereby completing the demobilization of the Contras and to all intents and purposes putting an end to the civil war in Nicaragua.

Many UNO parliamentarians, however, were angered by the continued presence of Sandinistas in the bureaucracy and delayed the legislative process. In reaction to this situation, President Chamorro appointed some Sandinistas as ministers when she shuffled her Cabinet in January 1993. Most UNO parliamentarians protested against this move by joining the opposition; as a result, the Sandinistas, together with a few UNO members, formed the majority in the parliament.

At a special meeting of the party congress of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) on 23 May, Daniel Ortega was re-elected secretary-general. Ortega's re-election

was a defeat for the moderate wing of the Sandinistas, especially since its leader, Sergio Ramirez, also lost his seat on the party's national directorate. The split within the FSLN was no longer in doubt in the early days of 1995; Sergio Ramirez resigned from the party on 10 January, one day after the resignation of four other members. While the FSLN was facing problems, tensions increased between President Chamorro and the National Assembly with respect to 66 constitutional amendments.

During a vote on 1 February 1995, the National Assembly had adopted amendments which, among other things, prevented relatives of the head of state in power from running as candidates for elected office. The clause in question was apparently aimed at Antonio Lacayo, Minister of the Presidency, who is related to Mrs. Chamorro. The latter's refusal to accept the amendments provoked a constitutional crisis.

The constitutional crisis lasted until June 1995, paralysing the government and disconcerting citizens still grappling with the country's serious economic problems. After a negotiation session that lasted 12 hours, on 15 June 1995 President Chamorro and the members of the National Assembly announced an agreement which maintained the main modifications favoured by the Assembly, but which also provided for secondary laws that would still allow the president to govern effectively.

In 1996, most of the attention centred on the national election slated for 20 October. There were demands for the postponement of the elections, especially because of delays in the preparations for the vote, notably in the distribution of identification cards and in the printing of ballots. President Chamorro, who is not seeking re-election, rejected those demands, however. As many as 22 candidates are running for president, but the main candidates are the former president, Daniel Ortega, leader of the Sandinistas, and Arnoldo Aleman of the Liberal Alliance, who, according to opinion polls, is the leading candidate.

### E. Situation in Guatemala

Progress was made in other countries of Central America after the Nicaraguan elections, tensions throughout the region diminishing considerably after the Sandinistas' fall from power. In April 1991, representatives of the Guatemalan government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity rebel group held their first official meeting in Mexico City. On 16 June 1991, government representatives and the rebel group opened formal peace negotiations in Mexico and on 25 July signed a statement on the measures needed to ensure democracy.

Tensions within the country remained high, however, with many citizens being tortured and killed by death squads. In February 1992, the United Nations released a report which condemned the human rights situation in Guatemala and the UN's Human Rights Commission considered adding the country to the list of the world's worst human rights violators. On 9 April 1992, the European Parliament passed a resolution protesting against the frequent murders and the torture of street children in Guatemala and called on European governments to help human rights workers in the country. On 16 October 1992, the Nobel Committee announced that it had awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to Rigoberta Menchu, an advocate of the rights of indigenous peoples and a strong critic of human rights abuses in Guatemala.

A few days earlier, on 8 October, representatives of the Guatemalan government and of Guatemalan refugees exiled in Mexico reached an agreement which cleared the way for the return of the refugees to their country. The return of some 45,000 refugees began on 20 January 1993 when about 3,000 persons arrived, accompanied by foreign representatives including some Canadian parliamentarians.

Despite progress in the peace process, the government's popularity did not increase. Indeed, the austerity measures it announced led to a series of protest marches in the streets of the capital. Faced by increased tensions and the constant threat of a military coup, President Serrano dissolved the Congress and suspended constitutional rule on 25 May 1993. The international community condemned President Serrano's actions and he was easily forced to resign after a bloodless military coup on 1 June. On 6 June, the Congress elected the country's human rights ombudsman, Ramiro de Leon Carpio, as President.

Despite the country's return to democracy, the military still had considerable influence and political assassinations continued to plague the country. Upon its return to Canada in July after a visit to Guatemala, a delegation from the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America urged Canada and other members of the international community to keep up the pressure on the Guatemalan government to take action to reduce human rights abuses.

Meanwhile, the international community also encouraged the resumption of discussions between the Guatemalan government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG). Norway played a key role in these efforts by sponsoring an informal meeting in Washington in November 1993 between representatives of the government, the URNG, the United Nations and other interested parties. These and other efforts were successful; in January 1994, the Guatemalan government and the URNG announced their decision to resume peace negotiations.

Representatives of the government and the URNG met in Oslo, Norway, on 13-23 June 1994 and were able to reach agreement on a number of questions. On 17 June, they signed an agreement allowing over one million displaced persons to return to their regions. On 23 June, they signed an agreement on the establishment of a commission of enquiry into human rights abuses during the civil war. The commission is expected to produce a report at the end of 1996.

The results of the legislative elections on 14 August, however, raised concerns. The Guatemalan Republican Front and the National Advanced Party, both right wing parties, obtained a majority of the votes. The high rate of abstention, almost 80% of the voters, prompted doubts about the health of Guatemalan democracy.

Another round of the peace talks between representatives of the government and the URNG ended in late November 1994 without agreement on human rights issues. In a bid to pave the way for more negotiations, President Ramiro de Leon Carpio announced on 3 March 1995, during a trip to Europe, that his government was ready to sign a United Nations plan guaranteeing the rights of the indigenous people of his country. The UN organized new negotiations between the government and the URNG starting in March.

Meanwhile, the human rights situation continues to raise concerns. In a report to the UN General Assembly on 23 March 1995, the observer mission on human rights in Guatemala

accused the government not only of condoning political assassinations, but also of participating in them.

The actions of the Guatemalan army, which in October 1995 killed 10 former refugees in a remote village, renewed fears in the country and abroad that violence would continue and disrupt the elections slated for November. There were no major incidents during the elections, however. None of the candidates for president won a clear majority. In a second round, held in January 1996, Alvaro Arzu of the National Advancement Party defeated Alfonso Portillo, despite the low turnout of voters. President Arzu's government continued negotiations with the URNG and, during 1996, a whole series of agreements were signed by the two sides, including one in May concerning social, economic and agrarian issues, and one in September concerning the reduction of Guatemala's military forces. Both sides hope to sign a formal peace accord by the end of the year.

#### F. Situation in El Salvador

The Salvadoran government and the FMLN resumed negotiations in February 1991 and made considerable progress, reaching agreement on, among other things, a truce on election day on 10 March. On 27 April, the government and the FMLN announced that they had reached agreement on constitutional amendments that would limit the powers of the armed forces and change the judicial system and the electoral process.

Negotiations continued, but to help them progress, the United States and the Soviet Union asked the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Javier Perez de Cuellar, to intervene and propose a peace plan. After a few days of negotiations, the FMLN and Salvadoran government representatives signed an agreement in New York on 25 September 1991 indicating the measures to be taken to end the civil war.

In a bid to obtain a peace accord before the end of his mandate as Secretary General of the UN, Javier Perez de Cuellar put considerable pressure on the negotiators. The tactic worked; just before midnight on 31 December 1991, the FMLN and Salvadoran government

representatives announced that they had reached agreement on a peace accord which they signed on 16 January 1992.

The signing of the peace accord put an end to a civil war which has lasted for some 12 years and which has cost the lives of at least 75,000 persons. The peace accord provides for the reform of the judicial and electoral systems in El Salvador and establishes safeguards against human-rights abuses. Over a nine-month period, both the government and the FMLN reduced their military forces and established a new national civil police. The government agreed to give land to peasants in FMLN-occupied areas. One of the most important elements of the peace accord, the formal cease-fire, which took effect on 1 February 1992, was monitored by the Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), which included Canadian soldiers.

In the weeks following the signing of the accord, there were a few problems in the implementation of some provisions, notably the allocation of lands. The most serious problem was the situation in the camps into which FMLN members were moving in accordance with the provisions of the ceasefire agreement. The lack of sanitary facilities and housing in the camps threatened to delay the concentration of the 7,500 FMLN troops and possibly disrupt the peace process. In response to requests for assistance, Canada provided \$200,000 in emergency aid to improve the sanitary facilities.

On 14 December 1992, the final group of FMLN guerrillas laid down their arms and demobilized, clearing the way for the FMLN to become an official political party. On 15 December, a ceremony attended by the UN Secretary General and the U.S. Vice-President was held in San Salvador to mark the formal end of the civil war.

On 15 March 1993, the Truth Commission released its report, which indicated that many senior military officers were responsible for human rights abuses and political assassinations. The report identified officers involved in the murder of six Jesuits in 1989 and of Archbishop Romero in 1980, as well as thousands of civilians during the course of the civil war. The Commission also indicated that members of the FMLN were involved in human rights abuses and called for military officers involved in such abuses to be purged from the army. President

Cristiani, however, called for an amnesty for all those named in the report and, on 20 March 1993, the legislative assembly passed a law granting amnesty.

After resisting, for many weeks, pressure from the international community to move against the officers named by the Truth Commission, the government finally took action. On 4 May 1993, the Salvadoran military announced the purge of a number of its officers.

In the fall of 1993, a number of FMLN officials were assassinated and there were fears that the growing tensions within the country would hamper preparations for the 20 March 1994 elections. At the end of 1993, there was also controversy over the role of the United States in El Salvador following revelations in the 6 December issue of the *New Yorker* magazine about a massacre in 1981 carried out by U.S.-trained Salvadoran soldiers.

In the 20 March 1994 elections, the ARENA Party won enough seats in the legislative elections to stay in power while the ARENA candidate in the presidential elections, Armando Calderon Sol, just missed winning an absolute majority, thus making a second round necessary. The 20 March elections took place in a relatively peaceful atmosphere, but international elections observers, including a number of Canadians, noted many irregularities such as incomplete voters' lists and delays at polling stations. The second round went ahead as planned on 24 April, with the ARENA presidential candidate winning an absolute majority, defeating Ruben Zamora, the left-wing candidate supported by the FMLN. The FMLN, despite the irregularities in the vote, emerged from the elections with at least a presence in Parliament, winning about one-third of the seats.

Despite problems, the political situation was stable enough to allow the United Nations officially to end its peacekeeping mission (ONUSAL) on 30 April 1995. In general, the country's citizens and foreign observers are optimistic that El Salvador will be able to continue to consolidate its democracy despite the economic problems. After three years of peace, nobody wants a return to the conflicts of the past and, despite the absence of the UN, which played a key role as mediator during the last three years, many are confident that the political and judicial reforms will continue.

## G. The Region and NAFTA

With the end of the conflict in El Salvador, tensions between the countries in the region have reduced considerably and there is more optimism that Central Americans will be able to concentrate on establishing real peace in their area and generating economic prosperity. The Central American countries are re-establishing the common market which had considerable success before the 1980s. Their representatives met in January 1991 with Mexican officials to discuss proposals for a free trade arrangement with Mexico. In March, the Foreign Ministers of the Central American countries met with those of Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia and with officials of the European Community to discuss an agreement, similar to that between the Community and the Andean countries, which would reduce tariffs on Central American products in the European market.

On 15-17 July 1991, the five Central American presidents met in San Salvador where they agreed that there was now no major obstacle to the signing of free trade agreements between their countries. Indeed, Guatemala and El Salvador had already signed a bilateral agreement and the President of Venezuela was present at the meeting to sign a free trade agreement with the Central American countries. The five presidents also agreed to let Panama participate in regional discussions, to re-establish the Organization of Central American States and to hold elections within three years for the regional parliament which had been agreed to at the Esquipulas meeting in May 1986.

On 30 November 1993, at the end of a meeting with the Central American presidents, President Bill Clinton of the United States announced that a study would be undertaken to examine the possible extension of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to Central American countries.

Progress in removing quota and other trade barriers in the Central American Common Market has been slow; however, the participants at the Summit of the Americas, held in Miami in December 1994, resolved to work towards free trade throughout the hemisphere and this may accelerate Central American efforts.

While happy with the progress made at the Summit of the Americas on free trade, the Central American countries fear that they will be at a disadvantage if Chile and other South

American countries become part of NAFTA before they do. On 30 January 1995, therefore, the presidents of the Central American countries, including Panama and Belize, met in San Jose, Costa Rica, with Prime Minister Chrétien. He was completing a visit to a number of Latin American countries who wanted to win his support for at least their temporary membership in NAFTA as soon as possible. Although he did not agree with their proposal for temporary membership, Mr. Chrétien stated that Canada supported the Central American countries' eventual full membership in NAFTA.

On 16 May 1996, Prime Minister Chrétien again met with the Central American leaders, this time in Ottawa. The region's aspirations to join NAFTA were again discussed and the leaders agreed to continue efforts to reduce trade barriers between Canada and the region. The Canadian government agreed to provide technical assistance to the Central American countries to help them reform those parts of their bureaucracies that were involved in international trade and investment issues. The government also announced the extension of a \$14.6-million line of credit to these countries.

The Central American leaders had hoped for more progress toward the inclusion of Central America in NAFTA, but recognized that more discussion was needed, especially since Chile is expected to join soon. Indeed, the leaders met with President Frei of Chile in July 1996 to discuss the possibility of a free trade agreement between Chile and Central America in order to increase trade and prepare the way for closer cooperation in the event of NAFTA's expansion.

Meanwhile, Canada continued to strengthen its links with Central America. On 12 September 1996, Minister of Foreign Affairs Lloyd Axworthy and Secretary of State Christine Stewart visited Guatemala to meet with the foreign ministers of seven Central American countries. Mr. Axworthy signed a Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement with Panama. Similar agreements, which incorporate NAFTA provisions concerning investments, are being negotiated with Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. Mr. Axworthy also announced that negotiations will begin in

the fall of 1996 on bilateral air transport agreements between Canada and a number of Central American countries.

## PARLIAMENTARY ACTION

On 2 December 1987, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Joe Clark, reiterated the fundamental principles of Canadian policy in Central America, his opposition to the intervention of third parties, and his support for a peace process which would make it possible to solve the economic and social problems that lie at the heart of the conflicts in the region.

On 29 January 1988, the establishment of the Special Committee of the House of Commons on the Peace Process in Central America was announced. The Special Committee was to examine how the provisions of the Esquipulas II Accord were implemented and how Canada could contribute to the peace process. On 5 July, the Committee tabled a report to the House which stated that Canada should do everything it could to help Central American countries find peace, while at the same time respecting the view of the countries concerned, and that it should also encourage the international community to do likewise. It also urged Canada to set up an international institute for human rights and democratic advancement (which the government did on 12 August 1988), to help supervise elections and to promote the establishment of a regional parliament.

On 9 February 1990, the Minister of National Defence tabled in the House of Commons an Order in Council confirming Canada's participation in ONUCA. The Minister and representatives of both opposition parties stated that they were pleased to see Canada contributing to the peace process in Central America and expressed hope for lasting peace in the region.

In February 1992, the Sub-committee on Development and Human Rights of the Standing Committee of the House of Commons on External Affairs and International Trade passed a motion calling on Canada to support actions by the UN Human Rights Commission to condemn the poor human rights record in Guatemala.

In January 1993, a delegation of Members of Parliament visited Central America. On 20 January, two members of the delegation, Dan Heap and Beryl Gaffney, accompanied the

first group of exiles to return to Guatemala from Mexico as a result of the 8 October 1992 agreement. On its return to Canada, the delegation called for more diplomatic pressure to make the government of El Salvador purge human rights abusers from the military.

On 26 January 1994, the Member of Parliament for Bourassa, Osvaldo Nunez, raised the issue of deportation notices given by the Immigration and Refugee Board to 50 Salvadoran individuals. In early February, Immigration Canada announced that the deportation notices were temporarily suspended in order to permit a re-examination of the cases.

On 6 April 1994, Christine Stewart, Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa) undertook a six-day visit to El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico. From 24 - 25 October 1994, she represented Canada at the International Conference on Peace and Development in Central America held in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, before going to Nicaragua for two days to meet President Chamorro.

On 30 January 1995, during a visit to Latin America, Prime Minister Chrétien met with the presidents of the seven Central American countries in San Jose, Costa Rica, where he indicated Canada's support for the eventual membership of these countries in NAFTA.

## CHRONOLOGY

- 8-9 January 1983 - The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Venezuela, Columbia and Panama launched the Contadora peace initiative.
- February 1984 - Canada made a concrete offer of aid to the peace process, which could take the form of a peacekeeping force.
- 6-7 August 1987 - The five Central American presidents signed a regional peace agreement based on the Arias plan, known as the Esquipulas II Accord.
- 23 March 1988 - The Sandinista government and the Contras signed a 60-day cease-fire agreement in Sapoá, Nicaragua.
- 13-14 February 1989 - The five Central American presidents met in Costa Del Sol in El Salvador where they agreed to demobilize the Contras based in Honduras in exchange for Nicaragua's commitment to implement political reforms.

- 25 February 1990 - The Nicaraguan elections produced a stunning upset, with Mrs. Chamorro defeating President Ortega and the National Opposition Union (UNO) receiving more votes than the Sandinistas.
- 19 April 1990 - The Sandinista government in Nicaragua and the Contra rebels signed a cease-fire agreement which called for the complete demobilization of the rebels by 10 June.
- 28 June 1990 - The Contra leaders surrendered their weapons to President Chamorro, more or less putting an end to the civil war in Nicaragua.
- 15-17 July 1991 - The five Central American presidents met in San Salvador and agreed to let Panama join their regional structures, reactivate the Organization of Central American States and hold elections for the regional parliament within three years.
- 31 December 1991 - With the assistance of United Nations Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar, representatives of the Salvadoran government and of the FMLN reached agreement on a peace accord.
- 16 January 1992 - Representatives of the Salvadoran government and of the FMLN in Mexico City signed the formal agreement putting an end to the civil war.
- 1 February 1992 - In accordance with the peace accord, a formal cease-fire came into effect in El Salvador. A UN peacekeeping force was put in place to monitor the cease-fire.
- 8 October 1992 - Representatives of Guatemalan refugees in Mexico signed an agreement with the government of Guatemala for the return of refugees to Guatemala.
- 16 October 1992 - Rigoberta Menchu, a Guatemalan human rights activist, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
- 14 December 1992 - The FMLN completed the demobilization of its troops and officially became a political party.
- 15 December 1992 - A ceremony in San Salvador marked the formal end of the civil war.
- 25 May 1993 - President Serrano of Guatemala suspended constitutional rule. The international community condemned the coup.

- 1 June 1993 - The army forced President Serrano to resign after a bloodless coup.
- 6 June 1993 - The Guatemalan Congress elected the human rights ombudsman, Ramiro de Leon Carpio, as the new President.
- 28 November 1993 - Carlos Roberto Reina of the Liberal Party, the opposition party, was elected President of Honduras.
- 30 November 1993 - President Clinton of the United States announced \$40 million in aid for Nicaragua during a meeting in Washington with the Central American presidents.
- 29 March 1994 - The Guatemalan government and the URNG signed a human rights accord.
- 24 April 1994 - In the second round of the Salvadoran elections, the ARENA candidate, Armando Calderon Sol, was elected president.
- 23 May 1994 - Daniel Ortega was re-elected secretary-general of the Sandinista National Liberation Front during a special meeting of the party congress.
- 13-23 June 1994 - Representatives of the Guatemalan government and of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), at a meeting in Oslo, signed agreements on displaced persons and for an inquiry into human rights abuses.
- 14 August 1994 - Two right-wing parties, the Guatemalan Republican Front Party and the National Advanced Party, won most of the votes during the Guatemalan legislative elections.
- 19 September 1994 - The General Assembly of the United Nations approved the creation of an observer mission on human rights in Guatemala.
- 9-11 December 1994 - The leaders of the Central American countries participated in the Summit of the Americas held in Miami, Florida.
- 30 January 1995 - Prime Minister Chrétien met the Central American presidents in San Jose, Costa Rica, to discuss the possible membership of these countries in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

- 1 February 1995 - The National Assembly of Nicaragua voted to accept 66 constitutional amendments despite President Chamorro's opposition to some of them.
- 23 March 1995 - In a report to the General Assembly, the UN observer mission on human rights in Guatemala accused Guatemalan government officials of condoning political assassinations.
- 15 June 1995 - President Chamorro and the National Assembly reached agreement on the new constitution, thereby ending the political crisis in Nicaragua.
- 5 October 1995 - Ten former refugees returning to a remote village were killed by Guatemalan troops.
- 7 January 1996 - In the second round of balloting, Alvaro Arzu was elected President of Guatemala.
- 6 May 1996 - Representatives of the Guatemalan government and of the National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) signed an agreement on social, economic and agrarian issues.
- 16 May 1996 - Prime Minister Jean Chrétien met in Ottawa with the six Central American presidents and the Prime Minister of Belize.
- 12 September 1996 - Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Christine Stewart, Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), met the foreign ministers of seven Central American countries in Guatemala.
- 17 September 1996 - President Arzu's government dismissed the Vice Minister of Defence and senior officers of the Guatemalan army because of their links to organized crime.
- 19 September 1996 - Representatives of the Guatemalan government and of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) signed an agreement reducing the country's military forces.

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